

Hartford and New Haven Railroad, Depot
35 Central Street
Windsor
Hartford County
Connecticut

HAER No. CT-23-A

HAER
CONN
2- WIND,
7-A-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

HAER
CONN,
2-WIND,
7-A-

Hartford and New Haven Railroad, Depot

HAER No. CT-23-A

Location: 35 Central Street (the north side of Central Street
at the west side of the tracks)
Town of Windsor, Hartford County, Connecticut

UTM: 18.695690.4635840
Quad: Hartford North

Date of Construction: 1871

Present Owner: National Railroad Passenger Corporation (AMTRAK)
400 North Capitol Street, NW
Washington, D. C. 20001

Present Use: Vacant

Significance: This mid 19th century railroad building with
exceptionally rich detail is one of the finest
examples of the French Second Empire Style in
Windsor. Windsor Center experienced a major
residential development in the two decades following
1870. A major factor in this development was the
railroad which made travelling easy and efficient.

Project Information
Statement:

This project was undertaken in November 1985 as a
mitigative measure as required by the Urban Mass
Transportation Administration, prior to the
rehabilitation of the buildings. Alterations to the
building include removal of interior partitions, south
chimney, all plaster except ceiling medallions,
lowering the cellar floor, and restructuring the
canopy roof to facilitate removal of the lower truss
system.

Prepared by: David W. Baber
Community Development Coordinator
Town of Windsor
275 Broad Street
Windsor, Connecticut 06095

Transmitted by: Jean P. Yearby, HAER, 1986

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: This structure was built and completed in 1871. The source for this date is The 18th Annual Report of the General Railroad Commission of the State of Connecticut for 1871. On page 10, the Commissioners state that "A commodious and elegant passenger building has been erected at Windsor station."
2. Architect: Not known.
3. Original and subsequent owners:
 - 1871 The building was constructed for the Hartford and New Haven Railroad.¹
 - 1872 The Hartford and New Haven Railroad merged with the New York and New Haven Railroad and became the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad.²
 - 1869 The New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad Company was taken over by the Penn Central Company.³ The Penn Central Railroad eventually declared bankruptcy. At that point, Amtrak was formed to operate a national passenger service.
4. Builder, contractor, supplier: Not known.
5. Original plans and construction: Original plans have not been located. However, a floor plan and elevation which were drawn in 1915 appear to have been done for the owner, the New York, New Haven, and Hartford Railroad, as part of a document. A copy is on page 10.
6. Alterations and additions: There appears to be no major alterations to the facility. According to the plan, the balustrade on the platform was later removed. Somewhat subsequent to that, the platform itself was taken down.

¹ "The 18th Annual Report of the General Railroad Commission of the State of Connecticut for 1871," The Press of Case, Lockwood and Brainard, Hartford, p. 10.

² Weller, John L. "The New Haven Railroad, its rise and fall," unpublished, p. 6.

³ Town of Windsor Land Records, Book 217, p. 597.

- B. Historical Context: The Hartford and Springfield Railroad began service through Windsor in December 1844. At that time, a depot was built on the site. In May 1847, the Hartford and Springfield Railroad merged with the Hartford and New Haven Railroad, retaining the latter name. The original depot was replaced with the current passenger building in 1871. In 1872, the Hartford and New Haven Railroad merged with the New York and New Haven Railroad, forming the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad. This merger created the largest and most powerful railroad in New England.

The railroad station in Windsor Center was a major factor in the extensive residential and commercial development which took place during this period. The railroad claimed that it was a 12-minute train ride from Windsor to Hartford, making it an easy commute for Hartford businessmen. The rich architecture of the depot reflects this importance.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This building is an outstanding example of French Second Empire architecture. Its detail, exceptionally elaborate for a structure of this size, reflects the social importance placed on railroad buildings during this period.
2. Condition of fabric: The building, which was vacated over twenty years ago, has remained empty and has suffered severely from neglect since then. Although the building is substantially deteriorated, an engineering study conducted recently has determined that the basic structure is sound.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: This is a one and one-half story building with a small wing to the north. There is a full basement under the main structure and the wing. The main body's dimensions are 25'9" (north and south elevations) x 62'6" (east and west elevations - parallel to the tracks). The wing is 14'6" (north) x 13'0" (east and west).
2. Foundation: The basement walls, built of rock-faced ashlar brownstone, are approximately 2' thick.
3. Wall construction: The walls are constructed with red brick laid in seven course English bonding. Walls are two bricks or 7-1/2-inches thick. Brick dimensions are 7-1/2" x 3-1/2" x 2-1/4". Pointing is fairly sound on the east and south facades. The west and north walls, as well as all sides on the wing, are badly deteriorated.

4. Structural systems, framing: The structural system in the exterior walls is load-bearing masonry. Interior partitions are wood frame. Floor joists are wood. There is a double truss in the attic. The upper portion, which provides the primary structural system for the roof, is connected by tie rods to a second truss system used to support the canopy roof over the platform.
5. Porches, stoops, balconies, bulkheads: A 10-foot canopy roof wraps around the east, south and west walls. This provided cover for a platform which has been removed. The canopy is supported by a truss system in the attic and large metal scrolled brackets. Additional support was provided by posts at each corner. The platform featured a balustrade with ornately turned balusters.
6. Chimneys: There are four chimneys on the building, two on the main body which are corbelled, and two on the wing. The north chimney on the main part of the building splits in the attic to provide flues to two rooms. The chimneys on the wing are seriously deteriorated.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: There are six door, two on the east, south and west sides. All of the doorways have a nondescript frame with a transom window and a cut brownstone lintel and sill. The doors have four panels. The top two panels in each are circular arch topped. All of the doors are missing or badly vandalized. All of the openings are sealed with plywood.
 - b. Windows and shutters: The openings on the main floor have a brownstone lintel and sill. The windows are six over six light double hung sash. The sash are, for the most part, missing or badly damaged. The openings are sealed with plywood.
8. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: Mansard roofs are used both on the main building and the wing. The material used is grey slate cut in a circular pattern. The roof is seriously deteriorated and a substantial number of slates are missing or broken.

The canopy roof has a very shallow pitch. The roofing material used is sheet metal. The underside of this roof is sheathed with tongue and grooved beaded boards.
 - b. Cornices, eaves: The building features wide eaves which conceal an internal gutter system. The eaves are supported by ornate scrolled brackets grouped in pairs around the building.

- c. Dormers, cupolas, towers: There are five dormers on the east roof, and two to the west. Each has a segmented arch sheet metal roof supported by small scrolled brackets and triangular recessed panel side walls. Scrolled consoles decorated the bottom of the dormer. The glazing is six over six light double hung sash. The upper sash in each has a segmented arch.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The main floor plan has two major room and several small spaces. The two large rooms are the gentlemen's and ladies' waiting rooms, each 21' x 23'. These rooms are separated by the staircase and the ticket office. South of the gentlemen's waiting room is the baggage room, measuring 8' x 12' and the telegraph office at 8' x 10'. To the north of the ladies' waiting room is the ladies' side room, measuring 12'4" x 12'8".

The attic is an open, unfinished space. The truss system for the main and canopy roofs consumes a considerable amount of available space.

Included in this document is a drawing dated November 26, 1915, which has the ground floor plan as well as south, east, and north elevations (page 10).

2. Stairways: Having a strictly utilitarian function, this stairway is nondescript. The treads and risers are supported by closed stringers. There is a simple rail.
3. Flooring: All of the floors have been covered by a resilient type material (such as linoleum).
4. Wall and ceiling finish: All lower walls are finished with beaded tongue and groove board wainscoating. This is capped with a molded rail. The upper walls and ceiling are finished with plaster over machine sawn lath. The two waiting rooms each have a plaster ceiling medallion. The medallion in the ladies' room (north) is identical to the center part of the one in the gentlemen's room (south) which has a band of large leaves around the outside to give it a strong, less delicate appearance.
5. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: All of the interior doorways and doors are identical. Each doorway has a heavy moulded casing. The doors have four panels. The top two panels in each door have circular arch tops. The exterior doors are identical except that they each have a transom window over the door

- b. Windows: All of the exterior windows on each floor are identical. On the main floor, the six over six light double hung sash are cased by heavy molded casings. There are small interior window openings at the ticket office and telegraph office.
- 6. Decorative features and trim: The interior is fairly austere. All decorative features and trim have been previously described.
- 7. Hardware: Most of the hardware have been removed. Only the door hinges, which are nondescript, remain.
- 8. Mechanical equipment:
 - a. Heating, airconditioning, ventilation: Originally, heat was provided by wood stoves placed in the waiting rooms and the telegraph/baggage area. An ornate cast iron vent is installed in the wall between the north waiting room and the ticket office. This is provided to circulate heat in the building.
 - b. Lighting: No original lighting fixtures remain in the building. There are, however, pieces of early electric fixtures at each ceiling medallion.
 - c. Plumbing: There are no plumbing fixtures or systems currently existing in the building.
- 9. Original furnishings: None remain.

D. Site:

- 1. General setting and orientation: The primary facade (facing the tracks) has a compass orientation to the west. The actual site contains two buildings, the passenger depot as described in this document and the freight depot as described in HAER No. CT-23-B. These two buildings sit diagonally from each other, across the intersection of the tracks and Central Avenue.

The structures in the general vicinity of the site are used either for commercial or industrial purposes. The entire perimeter of the building is paved with asphalt for sidewalks and the parking lot for the automobile dealership directly adjacent to this site.

- 2. Historic landscape design: There is no planned landscaping around the building. The floor plan on page 10, which was drawn in 1915, shows the placement of sidewalks at that point.

3. The only other building on the site is the freight depot which is described in HAER No. CT-23-B.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

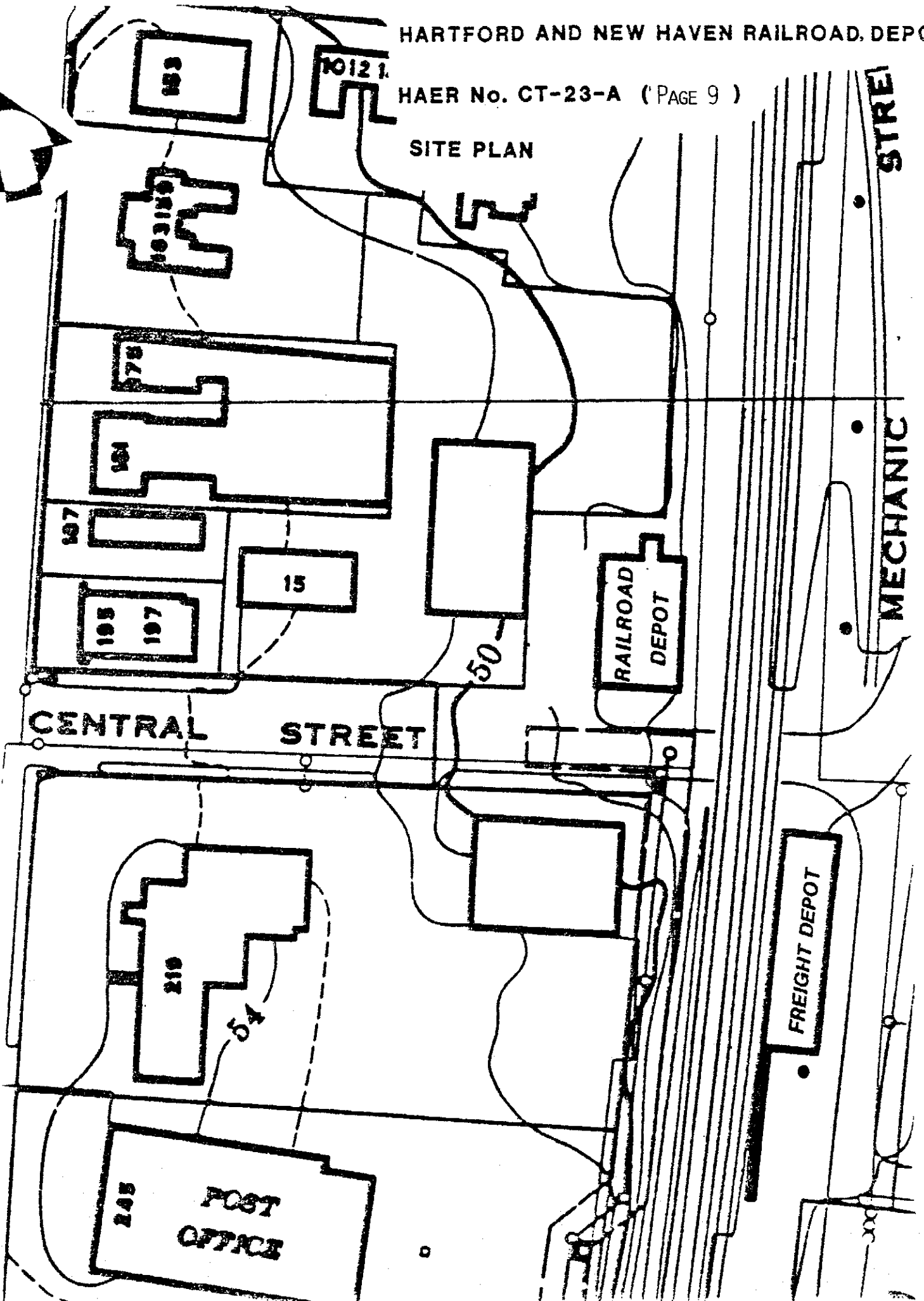
- A. Architectural drawing: Original drawings have not been located. There is a drawing from 1915 (included on page 10) which shows the main floor plan and elevation. The current alteration plans, prepared in 1985, are on file at the Windsor Town Hall.
- B. Historic views: No historic views have been located.
- C. Interviews: No interviews were conducted.
- D. Bibliography:
 1. Primary and unpublished sources:
 - a. Clerk's Office, Town of Windsor, "Windsor Land Records," Vol. 43, unpublished.
 - b. Tax Assessor's office, Town of Windsor, Tax Assessment Records, unpublished, 1969.
 2. Secondary and published sources:
 - a. Stiles, Henry R., "The History of Ancient Windsor," Vol. 1, 1905. Reprint. Somerset: The New Hampshire Publishing Company, 1976.
 - b. Maynard, Preston C., "Town of Windsor, Historic Survey," Windsor: Town of Windsor Press, 1982.
 - c. Weller, John L. "The New Haven Railroad, its rise and fall," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Ohio, no date.
 - d. State of Connecticut General Railroad Commission. The Eighteenth Annual Report of the General Railroad Commission of the State of Connecticut for 1871. Hartford: The Press of Case, Lockwood and Brainard, 1871.
 - e. Goodman, Don, "A Reminder of Another Era," The Windsor Journal, Vol. 7, Number 2, September 13, 1979, page 1.
 - f. Anonymous. "Windsor and The Railroad," The Windsor News-Weekly, Vol. unknown, April 4, 1947, page unknown.

E. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated:

1. Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Connecticut
2. Connecticut State Library, Hartford, Connecticut

F. Supplemental Material: None known.

SITE PLAN



ROOF
COVER SHED NONE.
PLATFORM 6' 1382'
HEATING
LIGHTS
SEWAGE
FINISH BRICK WALLS

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION
COST DATA TOTAL
COST OF BUILDING
AREA 1732 39 FT.
COST PER SQ FT
CUBICAL CONTENTS 53240 CU FT
COST PER CU FT
COST OF PLATFORM
COST OF COVER SHED.
CONTRACTOR

